In the Claims:

Please cancel Claims 22 and 26; and

Please amend Claims 1, 9, 10, 11, 17, and 19, as follows:

CLAIMS

We Claim:

1. (Currently Amended) A universal boot binding for use with a user's boot and a recreational riding board ~~such as a snowboard~~, the boot binding comprising:

an outer shell partially surrounding an interior space for receiving a user's boot, the outer shell comprising:

a base portion that is adapted to be fixed to an upper surface of a riding board, and

a generally vertical stabilizing portion mounted to said base portion at or near the rear of the base portion for stabilizing the boot heel area;

a closing gate for securing the boot within the binding, the closing gate connected to said outer shell and being pivotal between an open position, away from the interior space to open the interior space to allow insertion of said boot, and a closed position that holds the boot in the interior space; and

a catch system adapted to hold said closing gate in the open position until the boot impacts a portion of the catch system while being inserted into the interior space, wherein said portion of the catch system is not adapted to remain in contact with the boot after the boot impacts said portion of the catch system to close the closing gate ~~mate with a portion of the boot~~.

2. (Original) A boot binding system as in Claim 1, further comprising a latch system for securing the closing gate in the closed position, wherein, when said closing gate swings to the closed position, a distal end of the closing gate enters the latch system and engages with the latch system to hold the closing gate in the closed position.

3. (Original) A boot binding system as in Claim 2, wherein the closing gate further comprises a biasing mechanism that urges the closing gate into the closed position.

4. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 1, further comprising a lean support member pivotally connected to said base portion for extending upwards along a calf of the user.

5. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 1, wherein said stabilizing portion is adjustably attached to said base portion such that said stabilizing portion may be adjusted longitudinally toward and away from said closing gate.

6. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 1, wherein said catch system comprises a portion that is adjustably connected to said closing gate.

7. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 6, wherein said catch system comprises a portion adjustably connected to said outer shell.

8. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 6, wherein said catch system comprises a catch arm and a catch plate, wherein the catch arm is said portion of the catch system that is impacted by the boot, and wherein said catch plate is attached to said outer shell and is a portion of the binding upon which the catch arm catches to hold the closing gate in the open position.

9. (Currently Amended) A boot binding according to Claim 8, wherein ~~position of~~ said catch plate is adjustable in position on the outer shell ~~is adjustable~~.

10. (Currently Amended) A boot binding according to Claim 8, wherein ~~position of~~ said catch arm is adjustable in position on the closing gate ~~is adjustable~~.

11. (Currently Amended) A universal boot binding for use with a recreational riding board~~,~~ ~~such as a snowboard,~~ comprising:

an outer shell at partially surrounding an interior space for receiving a ~~conventional~~ boot;

a closing gate for securing the boot within the binding, the closing gate pivotally connected to said outer shell and being pivotal between an open position, away from the interior space to open the interior space to allow insertion of said boot, and a closed position over the instep of a user's boot that retains a user's boot in the outer shell;

a boot-activated actuator adapted to close the closing gate, wherein said actuator is not adapted to remain in contact with the user's boot after the boot impacts the actuator to close the closing gate; and

at least one adjustment system adapted to change the size and shape of the interior space.

12. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 11, further comprising a latching mechanism on the outer shell, wherein said closing gate is automatically secured in the closed position by the latching mechanism when the closing gate swings to the closed position.

13. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 12, wherein said latching mechanism is adjustable to tighten and to loosen the fit of the closing gate across the interior space.

14. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 12, wherein said latching mechanism includes a ratcheting mechanism that tightens the fit of said closing gate.

15. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 12, wherein said closing gate includes a tab and said latching mechanism includes a receiving slot that cooperates with said tab.

16. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 12, wherein the closing gate curves generally on a radius from a first side of the outer shell to a second side of the outer shell and said closing gate comprises a distal end adapted to cooperate with the latching mechanism, and the distal end is radially adjustable.

17. (Currently Amended) A boot binding according to Claim 12, wherein said latching mechanism is adjustable ~~on~~ in a generally vertical direction on the outer shell.

18. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 12, wherein said closing gate is adjustable in a generally vertical direction on the outer shell.

19. (Currently Amended) A boot binding according to Claim 16, wherein said ~~automatic~~ closing gate further comprises a support member that extends generally radially into the interior space for contacting an upper surface ~~sirface~~ of the boot in the interior space.

20. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 19, wherein said support member applies downward and rearward pressure to said upper surface of boot.

21. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 19, wherein position of said support member is radially adjustable on the closing gate.

22. (Canceled)

23. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 11, further comprising a forward lean system comprising a vertical leg support pivotally connected to the outer shell and adapted to pivot forward to a forward position and be locked in that forward position to urge a user's legs to lean forward.

24. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 23, wherein said forward lean system further comprises a locking system comprising:

a tab; and

a receiving slot that cooperates with said tab;

wherein said leg support is pivotally connected to said outer shell and is lockable by said locking system in an angle of connection, wherein said angle of connection is controlled by adjustable cooperation of said tab and said receiving slot.

25. (Original) A boot binding according to Claim 24, wherein said tab and said receiving slot releasably attach to one another via a ratcheting mechanism that adjust the position of said tab to said slot.

26. (Canceled)